Interview with Edwin Webb Martin

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR EDWIN WEBB MARTIN

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Q: Ambassador Martin, you are the author of a very fine recent book based upon documentary research and dealing with divergent American and British policies toward the emerging People's Republic of China. I'm happy to say that I am one of the people who read that manuscript at the University of Kentucky Press and finally recommended publication. But apart from that, since you were in China at the time that you deal with in that book, I was wondering if there was anything you could add from personal experience to what is in the book. Your book is very scholarly, but you don't say anything about your own experience. I thought perhaps there might be some additional information or experiences you could add.

MARTIN: Thank you very much for your kind words about the book. It was a book that I wanted to write because I felt that the existing literature on the subject of especially Chinese-American relations left out some things. It was often difficult, I think, in some of the books to follow the chronology, and there is a kind of logical sequence, I think, to the developments that I describe there. I wrote the book in a way that might be a little boring to some people, because there are a lot of quotations from documents, but I wanted to let people see what actually was said by American and British diplomats on the spot and let people draw their own conclusions.

Of course the interpretation of, and the selection of, materials and documents in my book are a result of my experience in China at that time and subsequently in the State Department on the China desk. But I didn't put much of my own personal experience in there mainly because I was a rather junior officer at the time and I was never stationed in the embassy. Therefore, I was not on the inside of any kind of decision-making.

I was first of all in Peking for about a year and nine or ten months doing Chinese language study. I'd started at Yale. My first post, really, in China as a reporting officer, was in Hangzhou, now part of Wuhan. Hangzhou is on the Yangtze River, about 600 miles up the river. There I had sort of a grass-roots view of what was going on in China.

The consular district, which I covered as the Chinese language officer and reporting officer, consisted of five provinces in Central China. They had a population of about 100 million people. To put things in perspective, how many countries in the world in 1948-49 had a population of 100 million? But this was just part of China. I was the only political reporting officer covering that territory.

I might say that in China, as you gentlemen know, at that time, and it had been so for decades, political reporting from the consulates was more important than in most countries, because it was a country where power had been in the hands of war lords and of regional political factions. Even as late as 1948, when I went to Hangzhou, there was a faction, you might say, in control of Central China—not in control of it, but it was very important there, namely the Guangxi clique, sometimes called the Li-Pai clique, lead by Li Tsung-Jen and Pai Ch'ung-hsi. It was around early '48, as I recall, that Pai Ch'ung-hsi was installed in Wuhan as the commander of the Central China area. Pai Ch'ung-hsi and Li Tsung-Jen, of course, were not the best of friends with Chiang Kai-shek, and we had the feeling that Chiang was often reluctant to call on Pai for support. For example, I think in the Huai-Hai campaign in the winter of '48-'49, Pai Ch'ung-hsi either refused to come to the aid of Chiang or Chiang didn't call on him. There were a lot of troops there that could

have perhaps (probably wouldn't have) made a difference, but in any case there was a significant lack of cooperation.

As far as what I could bring to shed light on what was going on, I think perhaps what I call the grass-root reporting that I did was a useful input to the embassy in Nanking and also to the State Department. We could send our reports directly to the State Department with copies to the embassy, and I was rather flattered when I got back to the State Department on a home leave in '49, that Walt Butterworth, who was then in charge of the Far Eastern Department, asked to see me. I came in and we talked about what had been going on in that part of the world. Nowadays, the State Department is such a large bureaucracy that a vice consul coming in from the field would be lucky to see the office director, to say nothing of the Assistant Secretary. [Laughter] Those are the ways things have changed.

I was just going to ask you if you'd like me to describe the kind of field trip that I did and the people that I saw to get information. I don't think I'd have anything substantive to contribute that would enlighten you particularly as to what you already know, but I think it might give you an idea of how we political reporters went about doing our job.

Of the last couple of trips I took out of Hangzhou, one was to Sian. This was in the fall of '48, and Sian was the headquarters of General Hu Tsung-man, who was a veteran military commander of the national government, and I called on him, had dinner with him. I called also on the governor of Shaanxi and on the mayor of Sian, who was a man named Wang, a rather interesting person who had studied for eight years in the Soviet Union, had once been a member of the Communist Party but was a renegade now, a very strongly ideological anti-communist. I went up to him primarily, at least on the consular side, to try to help some American missionaries there whose property had been occupied by one of the government offices. I went up there to try to help them solve this problem, get their property back, so they could return it to the use they had acquired it for. I called on all the newspaper editors, and on the president of the university and several department heads. I talked to people like the head of the agriculture department of the province of Shaanxi and

of the commerce and industry department. I talked to, of course, the missionaries and the few other Americans. There were some oil people up there.

In other words, I tried to get an idea of what the situation was from a broad spectrum of people ranging from General Hu Tsung-man at the very top, down to private individuals in universities, in business, in the newspapers, the media, and in this way gather a general picture of how people viewed the situation and particularly how they felt about the government and its activities and how they felt about the prospective arrival of the Communists. And by that time, most of the people that I interviewed were convinced that it was just a matter of time before the Communists would take over, and there was speculation about how they would behave, and whether or not one could carry on. There was no real consensus on that.

The last field trip I took out of Hangzhou was down in the other direction, down south through Jiangsu province and Hunan province. There I was accompanied a good deal of the time by a Standard Vacuum oil person, because on the consular side I was trying to help with getting this American company's properties released from the occupation, usually, of Army troops. So, even as the Communists were coming down from the north —this was the spring of '49, this was March of '49—we were still in the business of trying to get our properties back and help American business. But at the same time, this was also a great opportunity to try to take the pulse of people, look at the economic prospects, political and so forth.

Again, I saw a fairly broad range of people. But the thing that I remembered about that trip was that in Hunan, the governor, Ch'eng Ch'ien, unlike other governors that I called on and mayors, refused to see me at all. It wasn't outright refusal, just a put-off—"He's too busy," and so forth and so on. Well, we had a feeling that I'd gotten from talking to other people that Ch'eng Ch'ien was deliberately distancing himself from this American official (me) and that he would not be one on whom either Li Tsung-Jen or Chiang Kai-shek could depend. As it turned out—I think it was in the summer of '49—that Ch'eng Ch'ien just turned over

the whole province of Hunan to the Communists. This made the position of Li Tsung-Jen and Pai Ch'ung-hsi, who had retreated down to Guangxi and Kwanglung, untenable, and led to perhaps their earlier defeat than might otherwise have occurred. Ch'eng Ch'ien was duly rewarded, as were other people who turned over, like Fu Tso-Yi and Cheng Chih'chung, with various sinecure positions in the PRC. Ch'eng Ch'ien seemed to have lasted longer in these positions than some others.

So I can't say that what we did was all that important, but in this case, I think we did get an advanced signal, for whatever it was worth, at least to our embassy, that here's a governor that is very soft and already showing the direction which he'll probably go.

Q: Did you witness the Communist troops entering Hangzhou?

MARTIN: No, I didn't. Of course, our consulates stayed on there in Wuhan, but I happened to be overdue for home leave for almost a year. I had been separated from my wife and two girls for six months, and during that period my wife gave birth to twin boys in Manila. We were only able to communicate by cable. So I was mercifully granted home leave and transferred to Taiwan in May of 1949. So I got out of Hangzhou just a few days—literally a few days—before the Communists took the city. The situation was, as it was in many places in China at that time, one where it was anticipated that the Communists would take the city. The Nationalists had produced a lot of prefabricated pillboxes, which they put along the railroad line going north, and these were obviously sitting ducks for the mobile tactics of the Communists. In fact, the Communist guerrillas were operating south of Wuhan between Wuchang and Changsha, and I was going to drive a jeep down to Changsha, hoping I could get through. The very morning I had the jeep ready to go, the very morning that I was going to get out, I got word that there was a CAT plane over on the airfield at Wuchang, and if I went there I might be able to get a ride. I might add that all regular airline service had stopped into Wuhan by that time, and, of course, our own military assistance group which had been stationed in Wuhan had long since been evacuated.

Anyway, I went over to the airport, and there was an American pilot. I said, “Can I hitch a ride out to the coast?”

He said, “Where are you going?”

I said, “I'll go to any place that will take me to the coast.” [Laughter] “I've got orders to go down and fetch my family in the Philippines and go home on leave.” So he gave me a ride. He was going to Canton, which was actually the most convenient place for me to go. That's how I got out. But I was not there when the Communists came in.

Q: If I can just go back over some of this fascinating material with sort of a different angle, while you were still at a junior position by this time. You were there in Peking and Hangzhou at a rather decisive period.

MARTIN: Yes, yes.

Q: From '46 to '49, was the period, after all, when there was apparently some hope of settlement.

MARTIN: Yes.

Q: And a decisive turnaround, however you date it, at least by early 1948 or mid-1948. I'm just wondering, even while you were a language student there, do you recall what your own personal assessment of the situation was concerning the conflict between the KMT and CCP, how that might likely turn out, sort of what the mood was among you junior officers?

MARTIN: Yes, yes. I think that the mood was one of general pessimism, as far as the government was concerned. I think you're right, at the very beginning—well, when I got there in September of 1946, the Marshall mission, the Executive Headquarters was still in existence, but General Marshall wasn't very active at that time, and yes, we hadn't given

up hope that there might be some way of solving this thing peacefully, entirely. [Laughter] In other words, Marshall went home in January of '47, and he sort of said that his mission was really hopeless and he blamed both sides for their intractability.

As I say, I wasn't active in political reporting or making contacts or anything like that, but there were so-called Third Force people there. Around the universities and so forth they tended to be fairly optimistic about the possibility of doing business (with the Communists) or setting up some sort of a coalition government.

Q: Did you have the impression that the group that you worked with or the official staff there in Peking placed much confidence with the sort of Third Force group?

MARTIN: Well, looking in hindsight, of course, it's very difficult, after 40 years, to put yourself back in that period. But I would say that yes, we had more faith in them—that's a strong word, “faith.” We had more hope about the possibility of some sort of a coalition with these chaps in it than was justified, I think, by subsequent events. But anyway, I think so, yes.

Q: Was there any particular Chinese you remember? Did you associate with that group? This is a long time to remember.

MARTIN: Yes. No, as I say, I really can't remember names now. I'm sorry. I'll tell you about my own experience. I did a thing which none of my language officer colleagues did that gave me a rather interesting entree into the university, Peita. I attended, audited, a course taught in Chinese, and, I'm ashamed to say, I can't even remember the name of the professor, though I thought he was very good; he was a Chinese professor, of course. It was a course in diplomatic history, really—Chinese relations with foreign governments. It was an eye-opener to me, because it was obviously from the Chinese point of view, and none of the stuff I had read before was from the Chinese point of view. I found it very interesting.

But perhaps the main value of this to me was that as a student who sat there at a desk with other students, all of whom were Chinese, and I was a little older than most of them but not that much older, I had a chance to become acquainted with a number of Chinese students. I visited them in their dormitories and had some over to the house. My wife was born and brought up in China, and her Chinese accent is beautiful, so that was a great help in talking to people. Certainly the strong impression I had of the Chinese students was that as far as the Kuomintang was concerned, it was just beyond the pale; there was no hope for it really. This was due, in part, to the fact that the economic situation was very bad, and they had very poor prospects for getting jobs and so forth. On the other hand, a number of the students actually left the university and went over the hill to the Communists, where they got some sort of a job. I used to have arguments with these people. Of course, they were very critical of American policy, which was seen as supportive of the Kuomintang, and I think we did give about $3 billion in aid to the Nationalists after the war. We used to have arguments about that and whether American democracy and the capitalist system was applicable to China and so forth. They generally felt that it wasn't, that socialism was the only way for China to go. As far as I could tell, the students that I knew and talked to on a very friendly basis were not doctrinaire Marxists; in fact, I think they were fairly illiterate, as far as Marxist literature was concerned, but they looked at it from a point of view of nationalism. To them, the Communists represented Chinese nationalism more than the Nationalists. They also represented what they felt was a hope for the future, but the idea that China would be independent, stand up and be a power in the world was the main attraction, and they felt the Communists offered that more than the Nationalists did at that particular time.

Q: Did you ever discuss with them the possible relationships between a Communist China and the Soviet Union?

MARTIN: Yes, yes. I think that it came up in the discussions about which was the better way to go for China. Naturally, I tried to put forth the merits of the American system, which

they generally would not argue about, except in this sense, that they would say, “Well, it's all right for America, but it really doesn't apply to China and our situation.” I wouldn't say that any of them were strongly pro-Soviet, neither were they strongly anti-Soviet. Their view was, it seemed to me, very nationalistic and also, in terms of their own future, they felt that the Communists offered them, as young people, a future, whereas the Kuomintang offered them no jobs, depression, and an appearance of weakness, corruption, and really sort of doing the bidding of the United States. I think it's important to realize this, because I think there was a period, as we all know, when China and the Soviet Union were very close, but eventually the sense of Chinese nationalism came out. It's much more complicated than that.

Q: You mentioned Li Tsung-jen and Pai Ch'ung-hsi and the Guangxi clique. I believe by January, Chiang had resigned, January of '49.

MARTIN: That's right.

Q: And Li becomes the president of the republic and is trying to save the situation one way or the other. Certainly much of the literature suggests that there were persons in the American diplomatic establishment who had probably more confidence in the military abilities of Li and Pai Ch'ung-hsi than they did in Chiang. Were there any efforts while you were in Hangzhou, or did you make any recommendations to the effect that the United States should try to really support in any operational sense or aid? Did we, in other words, identify in any practical way with Li Tsung-Jen, once he had become responsible for the situation in China? Or did we ignore him, in effect? Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with what we were doing in that regard?

MARTIN: I guess I'd better just be frank with you and say that as a vice consul concerned with this 100 million population and consular duties and what was going on there, that I really don't think we got into that at all. I would try to report the best I could on what the local situation looked like, and I would occasionally get a chance to get some perhaps

stories or rumors or reports of what Li Tsung-Jen was thinking or doing. But by that time, things were getting pretty fragmented. The Communists had been on the north bank of the Yangtze, up at Nanking since—what?—for some time. In April they actually crossed the river. In March I was away about two or three weeks on this field trip, and I was concerned with the local situation. So I can't say that we got into this.

I might also say that the consul general in Hangzhou was a very fine old-line consular officer, Leo Callanan. But as far as any feel for the politics of the situation in Central China, he really didn't have it. That wasn't his bailiwick. So we really didn't get into that sort of thing.

Q: If I could ask one last question. As a political officer, a reporting officer in Hangzhou, did you get requests or instructions to seek out particular kinds of information?

MARTIN: No, I can't remember.

Q: From the State Department at all? Was there any indication that they were interested in finding out certain things?

MARTIN: No, I don't remember getting anything, especially on the political side. We had our required reports we had to send in on economic business, and I was covering economic stuff as well.

Q: So that was on your own initiative, what you did or did not report?

MARTIN: That's right. It was really on our own initiative. Yes. I don't recall. Undoubtedly there were some specific things that happened that the embassy might send us a query on or something like that, but as far as the—of course, Li Tsung-jen, by the spring of '49, was, as you know, the acting president. He was in Nanking. I don't recall anything significant, really.

Q: When you were in Taiwan, you must have witnessed something of the transfer of the Kuomintang. Can you say something about that?

MARTIN: Yes. Well, by the time I got there, which was September of '49, most of the troops and so forth had come over. The government was still in the mainland. I don't know whether by that time they were still in Canton or whether they'd gone up to Chungking. In any case, they were over there. The American establishment was very small in Taiwan at the time. In fact, I have a memory—it may not be accurate—that the number of Americans on Taiwan was less than 100, including women and children. Bob Strong, who was the designated charg# of our embassy to follow the national government around, arrived, I think, in December. He was just one man, and he just came and camped on our consulate, which was quite small at that time. I was there in the capacity, incidentally—it didn't make much difference what you did then, because lines weren't that rigid —but I was actually there as an economic officer, the only assignment I had in the Foreign Service as an economic officer, although my undergraduate major was economics and my graduate work at Fletcher School was primarily in economics, too.

But what I do remember about that fall of '49, particularly, was several things. One was the fact that the Communists failed to take Quemoy. That, I think, is something you can't blow up too much, but perhaps hasn't been given enough attention. That was a real morale boost. After all, the Nationalists, in the last six months, had been swept so easily away. When they got to Chungking, they didn't last very long, and even a shorter time at Chengdu. But you had an American-trained general, in whom we had a good deal of confidence, Sun Li-jen, a graduate of V.M.I. [Virginia Military Institute]. We had some of the, I guess, best equipped troops there in Taiwan and then on Quemoy (or Chinwen). And the Communists obviously underestimated either the will to fight—maybe it was the combination of will to fight plus the difficulty of making this rather short but still amphibious attack. And they were beaten back, and they didn't try it again.

Q: Was Sun Li-jen actually in command of the defense?

MARTIN: I'm not sure he was in command of the defense, but he had been in Taiwan for some time, and he was responsible for training these troops. I think he was given a good deal of credit for the victory there, whether he was in actual personal command or not.

Another interesting thing that happened—I'm trying to fish back in my memory—during that period in Taiwan was a rather ambiguous message which came from the State Department at the end of October, effect, which we were supposed to go to Chiang Kai-shek with, which said, in effect, that we thought that the Nationalists had enough materiel and equipment and so forth on Taiwan to defend the island adequately. As I say, the message was sort of mixed, because, on the one hand, it was the first communication we had sent from Washington to Chiang Kai-shek since he'd retired. It was sort of an acknowledgment that he was the head man, although at that time he had not yet actually reassumed his title. He was really sort of unofficial. This was a formal message to him, and so in a sense, it was a kind of a boost, because here we were saying, “Okay, you're it, and we're going to deal with you.” On the other hand, it wasn't a very clear-cut statement of just what we were going to do. [Laughter] It more or less said, “You've got enough materiel here and we have confidence that you're going to defend the place.”

Jessup came over. Ambassador Jessup came over. I think it was in January of '50. It was right around in there. He had an interview with Chiang Kai-shek, in which I was present. Chiang did most of the talking. He thought it was a matter of time before Japan went Communist, and Southeast Asia was bound to go the same way. War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was inevitable. Conculstion: the U.S. must support his anti-Communist fight. Our own military estimates were that it was just a matter of time before the Communists would attack Taiwan and that they would be able to conquer it. The earliest estimate, as I recall, was something like March of '50 and all the way up to the spring or summer of '50. March may be a little early, but there was a lot of reporting about the fact that the Communists were massing junks on the Fujian coast and things like that.

Another indication of what the State Department anticipated, I think I mentioned this in my book, or at least in a footnote in it, was that we evacuated dependents, especially families with children, like mine, and in my case, I was transferred to Rangoon, because we wanted to cut down on the staff in anticipation that there would be an invasion, trouble, and so forth.

Q: Why do you think the Communists did not actually attack Taiwan during that period?

MARTIN: I think that they were, as I said, surprised by their failure on Quemoy, and this was a heck of a lot bigger operation. I think they felt they needed to accumulate a lot of transport and get a lot more training and perhaps try to get air superiority. I don't know, but I think they were primarily military reasons.

Another reason might have been that, after all, they had launched their offensive across the Yangtze at Nanking in April of 1949, and in the next six months they had taken all of South China, and by the fall of 1949, late fall, they had taken most of West China as well. It was enormous territory. And then they had set up their government, of course. It was set up on the first of October 1949, as you know. In other words, they had a lot of things that were preoccupying them and having been set back at Quemoy, I think they probably just hadn't been able to organize and prepare well enough. The outbreak of the Korean War of course, and the intervention of the Seventh Fleet, changed things.

Q: You said that you accompanied Jessup.

MARTIN: Yes, I did.

Q: To have a discussion with Chiang Kai-shek, in which there was this rather mixed message.

MARTIN: That's my memory. I would have to go look at the documents.

Q: Did he request a firmer statement of assistance?

MARTIN: He probably did.

Q: From the United States at this time, do you know?

MARTIN: He probably did, yes, but I cannot tell you exactly. I'm sure you can find that in the documents. That was their general request, always for aid. [Laughter]

Q: Were you puzzled at the time by the rather uncertain stance by persons like Jessup, while, at the same time, perhaps the military estimates are that the Communists would take the island and that the dependents were being reduced?

MARTIN: Yes, that I remember very well because it's an impression rather than a specific fact. It's something I remember, that we were puzzled. We didn't really know what the signal was supposed to be. It was sort of, you know, “We wish you all sorts of success, and we think you can defend the island. You've got enough materiel here and so forth,” but we were very cautious about any kind of support we were going to commit ourselves to.

Q: Did those of you representing the United States in Taiwan at that time take issue with this, make a counterproposal, a recommendation back to Washington?

MARTIN: I don't think so. I don't recall. Wasn't it in January of '50 that Truman made his statement? I think we felt rather unhappy that we were getting such mixed signals, that we were not getting more clear-cut—it sort of left us in a difficult position.

Q: Did you feel you were in any position to in any way influence policy from Washington at this time?

MARTIN: Well, Bob Strong was in charge, and I was the economic officer in a small outfit. Bob Strong was a person who was quite outspoken. He didn't hesitate to express his views. Bob Strong had also been up to Chungking, and he had seen the collapse of the

GRC, of the Kuomintang. I think Bob Strong was very skeptical of the capabilities of the GRC to do any better and to hold out. In fact—and I think I mentioned this in my book—at the time just before he left—and this is before the Korean War in May 1950—he recommended drastic reduction of the staff, even more reduced than it was. He had, I think, very little faith that Taiwan would last. Of course, that was before the Korean War and our Seventh Fleet intervention. So the mood, in other words, I think is well reflected in Truman's statement that the U.S. would keep hands off Taiwan.

Q: Ambassador Martin, while you were on Taiwan, did you formulate an impression of how well or badly the Kuomintang was administering the place?

MARTIN: Well, I think that we didn't feel that they were administering it too well, but there was an improvement as compared to the time of Governor Chen Yi, which was, I think, in '47, when they had the riots and so forth. You still got overtones of that—or undertones, whichever they are—from the Taiwanese. But in fact, due in large part, I would say, without appearing to boast about my country, to our stimulus, there was under Governor Ch'en Ch'eng (who was the governor in '49, replaced by K.C. Wu about the end of that year or beginning of '50) there was a land reform program going on there which, I think, was one of the best land reform programs that I know of anywhere in that part of the world. And under this land reform program, large landowners were deprived of the land which they had over the minimum, and I forget the exact amount, but it was a fairly reasonable one. They were compensated partly in rice and partly in industrial bonds. This was administered by a joint Chinese-U.S. organization, the JCRR. I think the Chinese side's man was Chiang Mon-lin. He was the Chairman. On the U.S. side there were people like Hunter and others. No, I don't think Hunter was one. Ray Moyer was the principal U.S. member.

I think this turned out to be a—we didn't know how successful it was going to be, but I was impressed with it at the time. It seemed to me a sensible thing. It gave the Taiwanese a stake in the industrialization of Taiwan, and we all know how successful that's been in the

long run. It led also to an increase in agricultural production in Taiwan. So I would say that the program was well administered, and it was probably because the Kuomintang, the Nationalists, were fairly desperate then. Certainly land reform on the mainland, if it had been carried out like this, might have been quite decisive in the future of China. But by the time we came to Taiwan, as I say, the Nationalists were pretty desperate. They were more amenable to do what we advised, and also Taiwan's a small place, and it's much easier to do it there than it was in a very large land mass with a huge population.

Under the Japanese, of course, Taiwan had become more developed than probably any single province in China. I remember being impressed when I first went there by the fact that electricity was very widely available in small towns and that it was so cheap that people would keep the lights burning in their little shops and so forth all day. I guess they didn't have any meters or anything, so they might as well. [Laughter] They charged by the bulb or something; I don't know. But the whole place was better developed. I think you have to be very cautious about saying, “Well, if they'd only done this on the mainland.” [Laughter] It was a lot easier in Taiwan. But they did do it; I think that's important.

But on the other hand, as far as the administration is concerned, perhaps they didn't really have time, they hadn't been there that long, I mean, to try to recover from the very poor administration that they'd had under Chen Yi. I was rather impressed with Ch'en Ch'eng. I thought he was an able guy and, of course, with K.C. Wu as well. I think they were lucky to have people like that there at the time.

Q: You mentioned earlier that you got to know Chiang Ching-kuo.

MARTIN: Yes. Chiang Ching-kuo was an enigma in a way. He came there from Shanghai with a rather bad reputation, and at that time—I'm talking about '49 and '50, January, when I left, the latter part of January of '50—I forget exactly what Chiang Ching-kuo was doing. I think it was something to do with the veterans or something like that. He was a fairly young

guy, of course. He had studied in Russia, as we all know, and he had a Russian wife. I didn't have a great deal of business to take up with him, and I can't even remember the occasion on which I got acquainted with him, but I found him fairly easy to talk to and less dognamtic, I thought, than his father seemed to be, although I can't say I ever got really well acquainted with Chiang Kai-shek. Ching-kuo was a person that seemed to me to be more realistic about going back to the mainland and so forth. Naturally, that was the line, and nobody was going to undercut it, but he struck me as being a fairly down-to-earth, practical sort of guy. Obviously, he was prepared to execute people, and he did. [Laughter] but he wasn't a dogmatic tyrannical person at all. That was not my impression of him.

Q: I don't want to interrupt, but what led you to believe he was less doctrinaire about the return to the mainland position? Were there any specifics that you recall that he said, a general tone? That is, I must say, rather surprising that you gained that impression.

MARTIN: Yes. Well, let me say two things. One is that he was not directly concerned with that. In other words, whatever his concern it was local and had to do with the veterans and so forth, and that's what we talked about. The other is that the last time I saw Chiang Ching-Kuo was in 1968, when I stopped in Taiwan returning to Hong Kong from home leave and we had breakfast together. By that time, he was in a much more important position. The impression that I had—and I can't give you specifics that I had from that early acquaintance with him—was maintained in this private breakfast I had with him. Perhaps it's because we didn't talk about it. He didn't give me the line. I think that's the thing. I'm trying to remember. I think it's that I didn't get a kind of set line from him that I often got from other officials when I visited. We seemed to be on a more practical basis. He just struck me as a guy who was more in touch with the realities of the situation, and I think his record of Taiwan indicates that, at least—I don't know how much, because I haven't really been in touch with this in the last ten or 15 years, how much you can give the responsibility for the obvious prosperity of Taiwan and the fact that it hasn't gone into reckless adventures and so forth, I'm not sure how much you can give credit to Ching-kuo, but he's gone up and up until he finally became the top man. So he's obviously been

influential. I think his influence grew. I always felt that his influence would be on the side of realism, a more realistic appreciation of the facts of life and the relative impotence of Taiwan compared to the mainland and so forth.

Q: Given what you said about him, I imagine you've not been surprised that he's spearheaded a movement toward some degree of Taiwanization of Taiwan in the last year or so.

MARTIN: No, no, I'm not. As I say, I put these views forward simply as impressions, because I got to know him during this period, and I made subsequent visits to Taiwan and he was always very cordial to me and everything, but I found that his—I don't know. I don't think I can say anything more useful about it.

Q: Could we pass on to the period when you were at CA—Chinese Affairs?

MARTIN: Yes.

Q: That must have been very fascinating. I would assume that roughly the first half of it was dominated mainly by the Korean War in some form or other. Could you tell us what struck you, perhaps something that is not public knowledge?

MARTIN: [Laughter]

Q: I mean to include the negotiations, by the way.

MARTIN: Well, as far as we were concerned, since the Korean War was in full swing —perhaps I'd better date this so we'll know what period we're covering. I reported into the China desk in December of '51, and by that time things had been pretty well set in Korea. The Chinese had been in it for over a year. Actually, it was January of '52 when I really got into my slot in the Office of Chinese Affairs, so I had a year under the Truman Administration, approximately, and then Eisenhower came in in January of '53.

I guess there's one thing that I could contribute, perhaps, and perhaps not. It's in itself not really new. But the difference between the China policy under Truman in his last year—and it's the only time of which I can speak, because I was there at that time, that last year—and the Eisenhower policy toward China was very little, it was mainly cosmetic, and I can illustrate that point. My first job there was chief of political section, and that was during the Truman year. The next year I became deputy director. It had nothing to do with the change in administration; it was just internal bureaucratic things. We drafted an NSC paper on China policy in that last year (of Truman), and there was nothing new in it. It was as many NSC papers are. It was simply a description of what the policy was, and you put it down on paper and you get it approved, the way the policy developed. There was nothing basically new in it, but it did describe, I think, reflected accurately what the policy was that year, that last year. And for some reason or other, it never got through the whole NSC process until the following year, which was the Eisenhower Administration. Basically the same paper went through the NSC, and there was really no basic change.

This business about Chiang Kai-shek being “unleashed” by Eisenhower, again, that was simply when the Eisenhower Administration said, “We will no longer prevent them from attacking the mainland.” Well, as you can find in the documents, actually we made very sure that the Chinese on Taiwan understood that we would not support them and we would very much oppose their going to the mainland without our approval, and we had no intention of approving it.

Q: Lend-lease.

MARTIN: [Laughter] So there was really no basic change there. Having been in the Department and on the China desk during that particular transition period, the rhetoric got a lot tougher, but the basic policies—and, of course, there wasn't much we could change. [Laughter] I mean, we were already committed by Truman to defend Taiwan. I never saw any indication that Mr. Dulles, let alone President Eisenhower, any time were willing to back any kind of mainland invasion. But getting somebody like Walter Robertson in there,

who was a very nice guy but a fairly hard-liner, but not an extremist by any means, you had somebody who could go down there and talk to the right-wingers who were pretty strong in the Senate at that time. Dulles' line was pretty hard, but when it came right down to it, I don't think you could find any real difference in the policies. It was because our China policy had been set by the Korean War and by our response to the Korean War, basically, and especially after the Chinese intervened.

I do think that later on, in the mid-Fifties—and this is pure speculation—that under Dulles and Robertson and Eisenhower, our response to some Chinese overtures was tougher than it might have been under another administration. But at that particular time, because of the war, we were locked into a situation where there really was no flexibility, and I think that was recognized. But since China policy was a political issue on the Hill, the Republicans had to do whatever they could to make it look like they were pursing a different policy.

Q: There have been two main periods. One was in the mid-Fifties, around the time of the Dulles "brink of war" statement and the other period more recently since the publication of the Foreign Relations volumes covering that period, a lot of discussion of the use of nuclear threat by the United States to compel the Chinese to sign an armistice. Do you have anything to say about that?

MARTIN: No, I wasn't in on that at all. No, I'm sorry.

Q: I'm sorry to hear that. [Laughter]

MARTIN: [Laughter] Sorry. That would be an interesting subject. But I guess it was, perhaps, either too sensitive for someone of my position to be in on. I don't know to what extent anybody, even my boss, who was Walter McConaughy, would have been consulted on something like that. I really don't know.

Q: You were involved in the discussions with the Chinese at Geneva and later Warsaw talks.

MARTIN: Yes. And also at Panmunjom. I was the only person to be—it's really of no significance, but I happened to be the only person that was involved in the Panmunjom, the Geneva and the Warsaw talks. So I was in at the very ground floor, you might say, of our first diplomatic contacts with the Chinese Communists after the Korean War, which was at Panmunjom. I don't think there's anything special about that history that isn't known.

The thing that struck me rather strongly when we got together with Arthur Dean, who was our leader and, as you know, is a lawyer, a New York corporation lawyer, not a diplomat, (although he had diplomatic assignments before, going back, apparently to Mexico in the Twenties and Thirties) was that he was very strongly convinced that we must get an agreement with the Chinese for the sake of the Eisenhower Administration. He felt it would be a real feather in their cap. I thought that our chances of getting an agreement with the Chinese was very slim. He was telling the press we could do it in two weeks. Well, he finally walked out, as you may recall, of the talks. He walked out in December, and I don't think he ever forgave me for being right about that. It wasn't that I wanted them to fail, it's just that I didn't think the situation was one in which the Chinese had that much flexibility. This particularly was true because, after all, we were negotiating there in the DMZ, and also going on the DMZ were these prisoner interrogations. It was pretty obvious, once the prisoners began to opt not to return to China, that the Chinese couldn't let this go on, so there were all sorts of disturbances which prevented the interrogation. Finally, as you recall, in January of '54, the prisoners were released. The Indians were in charge of this under General Thimayya, who was a very, very interesting, very pleasant guy and a very capable guy. He said, “That's the way south; that's the way north,” and most of them went south.

Well, all during this hassle in the fall of '53, where the Chinese and the North Koreans were accusing us of sabotaging the armistice agreement and everything, it was just not the kind of atmosphere where they're going to reach an agreement implementing the armistice agreement. It was sort of inevitable, I think, that the thing would just be stalemated, and it was. I think Dean might have handled it a little better, although I think basically he was right. When you're at a negotiation and the people you're negotiating with start attacking your good faith, attacking your credentials and your ability to negotiate, then you might as well fold up. As a minimum in a negotiation, you have to have both sides saying, “Okay, you do represent the other side, and we'll negotiate with you.” That's where we got at that particular time. I think that Dean did contribute, because he was a very good briefer and a very good lawyer, to an understanding, to giving a public explanation in his press conferences after the various sessions, which made the U.N. side, the U.S. side, look more flexible, which we were—there's no question about it—than the Chinese. I think that's about all we could get out of that. [Laughter]

Q: What kind of agreement was Dean actually hoping to reach? Was it a peace treaty with the Chinese?

MARTIN: No, no. This was very limited. This was a very limited negotiation, and maybe that was why he felt we could accomplish it. Under Paragraph 60 of the armistice agreement, the two sides were to meet, to discuss the future of Korea and arrive at some political settlement. Well, our negotiations in Panmunjom were merely to make arrangements to set up the conference: it was not the conference itself, just to make arrangements to set up the conference. And as far as we were concerned, there were only two things to talk about: when would the conference be held and where would it be held. The Chinese and the North Koreans wanted to discuss the composition of the conference. We felt the composition of the conference had already been settled by Paragraph 60 of the armistice agreement, and actually, that language about the two sides was originally introduced by the Communist side. So one wouldn't expect that they would make an issue

of this, but they did. They wanted to have neutral countries, and they wanted to have the Soviet Union there. We said, “We don't object to the Soviet Union being there, but we can't call it neutral. It's completely on your side.” So this is what we wrangled about, and we eventually divided into two committees.

We did come to one agreement that was on the agenda. [Laughter] But then we divided into two committees. I was in charge of the subcommittee which was discussing the time and place of the conference, and naturally that was just marking time, because the real issue was the composition, and we never got anywhere on that. But I think it should be pointed out that in Berlin, in January of '54, an agreement was reached to have a conference on Korea and on Indochina to convene in Geneva in April of 1954. Most books refer to this as the Geneva Conference on Indochina. They totally ignore the fact that Korea was discussed. But, in fact, there was a conference of the two sides as provided in the armistice agreement, and Zhou En-lai was there. The only time that I'd ever seen Zhou En-lai in action was at this conference. It was interesting to watch him.

But anyway, that Panmunjom exercise was an exercise in complete futility.

Q: Forgive me, but my curiosity will not let me let you get away with referring to Zhou En-lai as interesting to watch. Can't you tell us more than that about Zhou En-lai? [Laughter]

MARTIN: Well, he had been a Chinese opera actor as a student, you know, so he was a dramatic fellow, and he had this high-pitched voice which was perhaps a little . . .

Q: Women's parts.

MARTIN: Yes, perhaps that's why he did women's parts. But that came across when he was making his points. I don't know what else to say about him. What he said and so forth was pretty much to be expected. Our main problem at the Korean end (and that's why I was an advisor to the U.S. delegation, because of my experience in Panmunjom), was, as it often was, of getting the South Koreans to go along and to present a united front. We

finally succeeded in getting a position which we could offer as the U.N. side's position, and it was rejected by the Communists, which wasn't surprising, and the conference went on to deal with Indochina, where they really did something. So it's not surprising that people forget about the Korean part because nothing came out of it at all.

Q: Were the South Koreans actually represented in that conference, the brief conference? Because they had not signed the armistice.

MARTIN: No, they had not signed the armistice, that's true. No, I don't think that they were officially represented, but we didn't want them to denounce our proposal, because it would look very poor: the Communists could always come back and say, “Well, look, the South Koreans don't agree to this.” We finally got something or we got them to be still or agree not to denounce our proposal.

Of course, the thing that interested me as far as our relations with China was concerned at the Geneva conference, was that we sat down and had bilateral discussions with the Chinese on the question of the Americans detained in China and the Chinese who had not been allowed to leave the United States. Those two issues really weren't comparable, because we had never imprisoned any Chinese. There had been some who had been refused permission to leave because, (interestingly enough the same argument that is being made by Gorbachev on why he won't let some Jews leave), because they knew secrets. Well, we said, “These people know secrets.” During the Korean War whether that was a valid thing or not I don't know: but certainly after the Korean War it was no longer valid, so we had no interest whatsoever in keeping them. In subsequent years we even went to prisons to try to get Chinese that had been convicted of crimes to say they'd go back to the mainland if we let them go. [Laughter] We just couldn't find anybody. [Laughter] They'd rather stay in this country. In other words, we went to great lengths to try to get Chinese to go back to the mainland. We didn't force anybody, obviously, but if they wanted to, even if they were in jail, they could return. Having bilateral discussions with the PRC at Geneva was a breakthrough. I actually drafted the telegram that went to Dulles. Dulles, by

that time, had left the Geneva conference, and Smith, the Under Secretary or whatever he was then at that time, Bedell Smith was in charge, and Robertson was still there. I drafted the telegram which went back to the Department, saying, “We have to sit down and talk to the Chinese.” We wanted to try to do it through the British, as we'd done before, but they would have none of it. They said, “You're here talking to us. We're in the same conference with you, and you won't even sit down and talk bilaterally,” so we had to talk bilaterally. We brought in Trevelyan, the British charg# at that time, as sort of an umpire to begin with, but then we wound up with bilateral talks. So that was the beginning, sort of a preliminary act to the Warsaw talks on the Geneva talks which began later.

In the telegram we just laid it out that, “We're either going to talk to the Chinese or we're not going to get anywhere on the prisoner issue. It's not going to read very well at home, you know, if you say, 'These guys are detaining our citizens and we refuse to talk to them about it.” Of course, we had tried to talk to them before when we were still in China, and they wouldn't talk to us then. So as I say, I drafted the telegram. It was approved by Robertson and by Bedell Smith, and sent to Dulles. Although he seemed to be a little reluctant, he did eventually agree we would do it, so we went ahead. [Laughter] That was the beginning of that. Alex Johnson was, of course, our secretary general. Wang Ping-nan was the secretary general of the Chinese side, and it was interesting that they were the two negotiators in '55 when the talks restarted. [See FRUAS 1955-57 on China for further details]

Q: What was the reluctance, in your judgment, on the part of Dulles?

MARTIN: Well, it was because the background of the Geneva conference. It was agreed at Berlin that the Chinese would be there, the Chinese Communists, and we knew Zhou En-lai would be there. Peking obviously played it up: “This shows we're now a great power. We're sitting down with the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, and France.” The PRC at that time were trying to get as much as they could in gestures of recognition from the United States. Our policy was very rigid on that, and people like McConaughy and others

would make speeches saying , “Just because we're sitting down with them in a conference with a lot of other people doesn't mean we're recognizing them.” But sitting down with them bilaterally might seem like a step forward to recognition, at least an appearance of an acceptance, of the PRC. That's why we tried to get the British involved, , and we had Trevelyan there for two sessions before to bow out. the talks were finally reduced to the consular level; but the PRC did release some of our people. Then the talks sort of petered out. That was the background to the Geneva and Warsaw talks. You used the word “Warsaw talks,” and that's usually what's referred to, but people forget that for two and a half years it was the Geneva talks.

Q: Can you go over very briefly the issues in the Geneva talks other than the exchange of prisoners?

MARTIN: Well, that was the only thing we were interested in. Well, I shouldn't say that. That's the first thing we were interested in, and the second was the renunciation of force in the Taiwan Strait. No, the Chinese weren't about to do this. They felt that this was an internal affair because Taiwan was part of China, so they could not enter formally into an international agreement, renouncing force against their own territory. So it was a built-in, total impasse there. That went on. The Chinese used the talks to try to get us to change our policy on travel to China and on trade and so forth. At that time, we were very rigid. I participated in the talks only at the very beginning, in August '55, because I had been assigned to the National War College spent a year there, and I was really out of Chinese affairs for that year.

Then I went to Britain, to London, and at first I was assigned to work on NATO affairs, but then a fellow named Ringwalt, who had been in London for six or seven years working on the Far East, finally departed, and they put me in his place simply because I was available and had the background. Then I worked on the Far East, but not so much on China, really, until '57, when I had to make a flight to Geneva every month, almost every month, to participate in the ongoing Geneva talks. By that time they had been pretty well stalled.

Alex Johnson was the principal negotiator, and I was his assistant. In December of '57 we were instructed to inform the Chinese that Johnson had been assigned to Thailand as ambassador and would be leaving, and I was going to take his place. Well, at that time, I had the rank of first secretary in the embassy at London. So the Chinese said, “These are ambassadorial talks, and we like Mr. Martin, we can't accept him because he's not an ambassador.” We had deliberately tried to downgrade the talks; there's no question about it. We felt we weren't getting anywhere. After returning to London, I had some correspondence with the Chinese side trying to get talks going at my level, but it didn't work out. The only signficance of that, I think, is that we and the Chinese both decided that these Geneva talks were getting nowhere. We were the ones that took the initiative. I don't know whether they honestly thought in Washington that the Chinese would accept this; I never thought they would.

Q: Accept the downgrading?

MARTIN: Accept the downgrading of the talks. Yes, yes.

Q: You mentioned one of the issues was the United States' effort to persuade the Chinese to denounce the use of force.

MARTIN: That's right.

Q: Then we jumped up to '57.

MARTIN: That's because I wasn't connected with the talks in between those times.

Q: But in '54, in other words, did you have the first discussions with the Chinese, urging them to denounce force?

MARTIN: No, no.

Q: When was that first? Was that before the Taiwan Strait crisis or after?

MARTIN: In June '54, we started these bilateral talks at the Geneva Conference. By agreement they were reduced to the consular level. The Chinese released a few American prisoners, and I think we told them we had some Chinese who were leaving and so forth. These talks were held intermittently, I think, for four or five weeks in Geneva at that level. Now, that's the background of the Warsaw talks.

Q: So there was no discussion of renunciation of force by that time.

MARTIN: That was strictly limited to exchanges.

Q: So there's really no discussion of renunciation of force until after the first so-called Taiwan Strait crisis?

MARTIN: That's right.

Q: In '54 or '55.

MARTIN: As you recall the background of the Geneva talks was that in April of '55, there was a conference of non-aligned countries in Indonesia, and Zhou En-lai said he would be willing to talk to the United States. That put us on the spot, and we agreed. We had communications through the British, and set up the Geneva talks at the ambassadorial level. The renunciation of force then became a theme song of ours. “You can't do anything else until you renounce force.”

Q: That emerges out of the first Taiwan Strait crisis, probably.

MARTIN: Probably did, yes. Yes.

Q: Back to the background of the first Taiwan Strait crisis. Can you give me a feel for who was in charge at the time of the first Taiwan Strait crisis and your position? You were deputy director?

MARTIN: That was '54. I became deputy director in '53. Okay. Walter McConaughy was the director, and Walter Robertson was the assistant secretary. I forget who was his deputy at that time. This was something that also got into the U.N. Well, I should back up further. After the Geneva conference, the Nationalists, of course, were quite unhappy about the fact that we sat down with the Chinese Communists there and actually were having consular-level talks. The Korean War was over, we'd had the Indochina agreement, and so the decision was made in the Department, which obviously was supported by Eisenhower, to substitute for the Truman declaration of, “The Seventh Fleet will protect Taiwan,” a treaty, mutual defense treaty, this was signed by the Republic of China and the U.S. in December of '54. Of course, it came out that we were negotiating this treaty. I don't know to what extent this triggered the bombardments of Chinmen and offshore islands by the Communists, but nevertheless, they were attacking. We were negotiating the treaty.

Q: I'm confused here. My history is not very good. Are you suggesting that the intention on the part of the administration in negotiating mutual security treaty preceded the growing escalation of tension in the Taiwan Strait?

MARTIN: They went along together. I can't remember exact dates of when the shellings began. Was it August of '54?

Q: September 9th.

MARTIN: September 9th. You're asking me a question I can't answer, whether we had intention of negotiating the treaty before this began or not.

I came back from Panmunjom in February, and I was back in Washington for about six weeks and then went to Geneva. I came back from Geneva in June of '54. So that was a

long separation from my family. As I recall, in that period of March and early April, between the Panmunjom negotiations and the Geneva Conference, I was pretty well focusing in preparing for the Conference. I don't remember any discussion about the possibility of the treaty. (The treaty was first considered in March, 1954, but put off because of the impending Geneva Conference.)

Q: To avoid possible confusion on the record, Ambassador Martin, you referred a minute ago to reassurance of the Chinese. You meant the ROC on Taiwan.

MARTIN: Yes, yes. I meant the Nationalists, the ROC, reassurance that we really intended to support them, and that was policy. That was written into the NSC papers, and it was publicly declared. There was no secret about it. I can't remember whether anybody seriously argued against it. I think doubts were raised, and perhaps legitimately, that, you know, “Do you want to go this far?” But in CA, we supported the treaty, because we felt that if it is, indeed—and it was—U.S. policy to defend Taiwan and the Pescadores, let's make that completely clear to everybody, including the Chinese Communists, so they won't make a mistake and feel that we really don't mean it.

Now, Dulles, as I recall, was not opposed to it, but he was somewhat skeptical that Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists would accept a treaty under the conditions of which we would have to impose, which would be that it would be strictly limited to Taiwan and the Pescadores, and, as I recall, he said words to the effect of, “Well, you know, this puts some limitations on them. Why would they accept it?” Our judgment in CA, which turned out to be completely right for a change, was that, “He'll accept this. As far as he's concerned, a guarantee by the U.S. for his protection in Taiwan is the most important thing he can get. Despite all the talk that's going on, Chiang Kai-shek, basically, in his whole military history had been a very cautious person, and the idea that he is going to go back to the mainland without some sort of support from the United States is just not a practical one, and he knows it.”

Q: I feel a little unclear as to whether you think—and there may be no basis for a judgment —that the Chinese might have started the crisis in part as sort of retaliation, in an effort to create alarm and prevent the signing of such a treaty.

MARTIN: Well, yes, I think it's possible. I think it's possible that they did. I don't know whether it's the chicken or the egg here, but the more I think about it, the more I'm convinced in my own mind that we had this idea of a treaty for the reasons I've mentioned before any specific attack on the offshore islands, because, after all, the Chinese Communists' position, the Peking position, was, “We're going to liberate Taiwan, and we're going to do it by force.” They had continued to say this, so there was no question that there was a threat. Now, the offshore island business is always a very, very tricky one, and all I can say is—and, again, I don't want to say like, “I told you so”—but we in CA constantly felt that the dangers of the offshore island position were exaggerated by the critics, and maybe it's just luck, but it turned out here it's more than 30 years later, and there has not been a war resulting from the offshore island position.

But as you recall, we signed the treaty in December, and then, of course, the Communists understandably made a tremendous stink about it, and there were further threats. We took it to the U.N. I must confess I'd have to refresh my memory, but in January '55 was the New Zealand resolution, which I hesitate to even mention, because I can't remember the contents of it. But it had to do with the offshore islands of January '55. We helped the Chinese to evacuate the Tachen islands, and they evacuated another island which we felt was beyond air cover and beyond their ability to really protect. They did it. But, of course, Quemoy and Matsu were always the focus of this offshore island contention, because they're right in Amoy harbor, practically, and they have great political symbolism, of course, for the Nationalists.

Q: May I ask you one question? The Nationalists later claimed that in exchange for their agreement to evacuate the Tachen islands, we'd given them a private pledge to defend Quemoy.

MARTIN: I don't know anything about that, I really don't. I'm very skeptical.

Q: I am, too.

MARTIN: I think that we have never gone beyond the congressional resolution or whatever it was that said it's in the area. We've always deliberately left it vague; we never gave them a specific pledge. I don't think we ever did. I'm sure we never did. (There is documentary evidence to partially support the Nationialists' claim of a pledge.)

Q: Just to see how things were being done in the government, the procedure and process, you said, for example, that you always felt that the critics' concern about policy toward the offshore islands was somewhat exaggerated, that there was not the danger they had envisioned.

MARTIN: There was a danger, obviously, but they would say, “It's going to drag us into a war with the Communists and everything else.” Yes.

Q: Were the cost benefits of the evacuation of Quemoy and Matsu sort of broadly and widely considered within the Office of Chinese Affairs at this time?

MARTIN: Well, I would say this, and, again, my memory is trying to dredge 30-year-old —more than 30 years ago. But I think that our position was—again, I would consider it a pragmatic position, and that is that, yes, if we had our way, we'd get off the offshore islands. They are dangerous. They're not as dangerous as people say, but they're not a good place to be. But the only way we could get the Nationalists off would be possibly even some resort to force, to force them off. They were determined to hang on. It meant a great deal to them for its political symbolism, having a little toe on the mainland. We had

no commitment, and we felt that—and I think this was expressed to the Nationalists on a number of occasions, “You've got far too much out there. You're risking too much. This is not a good thing to do.” So I think definitely we did not feel that it was a good policy as far as the Nationalists were concerned, but it was their policy, and we were not willing to take our opposition to the point of using force or some drastic leverage against them to pull out.

Q: Was it actually discussed in those terms, let's say within your office, that, “It will require us to go to that point”?

MARTIN: Oh, I think . . .

Q: Do you recall?

MARTIN: Well, something like this, of course, let me say this, especially under the Eisenhower Administration, and that's when I spent most of my time on China desk, the NSC—a thing like this, we would perhaps make an initial draft of the policy, but all of this sort of thing was handled by NSC committees. I chaired one on China, but it had representatives from the Pentagon, the CIA, even in some aspects of China policy, the Treasury Department. In other words, these decisions and these discussions took place in the context of NSC papers, NSC meetings, subcommittee meetings, and that sort of thing.

The funny thing is, just on a personal note, that my last 12 years in the Foreign Service, I was never stationed in Washington, so I can't compare how it was under Johnson and Nixon and so forth. But my feeling is that in the Eisenhower years, there was more sort of committee work, there was more interdepartmental exchange and working than there was under subsequent administrations. But that's just a personal thing. Certainly in my time, there was.

Q: Did this lead to a reduction in the direct influence upon policy formulation of the Office of China Affairs, for example?

MARTIN: No, I don't know. Again, I don't think so, because we chaired the committee, we usually drafted the stuff, and then it was just a question of getting through. But in the years that I was in the Department in Washington, we had two very strong Secretaries, Acheson and Dulles. That basically is what gave our State Department more clout than I think it's had recently. I was in a number of meetings in Dulles' office when he would call up Eisenhower, while we were having a meeting, to discuss something with the President. My feeling is we had as much clout as we've ever had in those days.

Q: You speak of two very strong Secretaries. Did you feel that someone like Secretary Dulles relied upon your office for a source of ideas or did he have other sources?

MARTIN: I'll give you an example. I can't remember whether it was this offshore island crisis or the one in '58. Let's see. Dulles died in '59, didn't he? He was still there in '58. Anyway, to give you an example, in the particular crisis situation, I remember being in a meeting. I used to go up there and back up Robertson. He certainly had a lot of trust in Robertson, but at this particular meeting on the offshore island crisis—I guess it was probably '58, because he turned to his Counselor at that time, Freddy Reinhardt.

Q: MacArthur?

MARTIN: No, it was after MacArthur. Anyway, people were supposed to produce some sort of a position for him, and he would say to Robertson, “You do so and so.” Then he'd say to his counselor, “You do so and so.” And so forth. What happened, Robertson would call us up and say, “Will you do this for us?” And the counselor would call us up and say, “Will you do this for us?” So Dulles didn't turn to us as an office directly, but Robertson, the Counselor, and there was somebody else—I remember there were three people calling us. He thought he had about three different people to do it, but we had the expertise, so they all asked us to do it. That was one of the problems in a crisis like this, because we'd get tremendous overload, and then we'd have the press, the press people. Our press office would want us to be available to answer questions. In other words, the power of

an office like Chinese Affairs was in its expertise and the fact that it had been following the details and keeping track of it. So to come up with a paper or a position, you had the input. To that extent, we had influence. Now, you know, it had to go through the counselor, and he may have changed it with Robertson and so forth. But it seemed to me that the committee system, which perhaps did become a little cumbersome, the OCB committee and subcommittee system under Eisenhower, did have the advantage of getting a lot of input from—we called ourselves working level—from the working level at Pentagon, at CIA, and so forth. The working level types, we maintained good contacts with each other, and naturally, on our intelligence estimates, I suppose there were estimates that I wasn't cleared to see, but I saw some pretty sensitive stuff and so did other people. We were getting all these inputs. So I think we had about as good a basis as anybody could have for making judgments. As I say, our judgments on some of these things, I think, not necessarily on policy, but of what the situation was, what was going to happen, that the offshore islands weren't going to lead to war and so forth, I think those judgments have stood the test of time pretty well.

Q: Could we perhaps move on to the 1958 crisis?

MARTIN: Yes, yes.

Q: Would you like to add something?

MARTIN: Yes. I would like to point out that—let's go to July first. Well, let's go back to December '57. I was appointed the U.S. representative to the Communist side. The Chinese said, “You're not an ambassador,” so we did deliberately downgrade it. Washington, I think, didn't give a damn, really, at that time for continuing the talks, although, as I said, I carried on some correspondence under instructions of Washington from London with somebody—I can't remember his name—who was my opposite number on the Chinese delegation, saying, “We'd like to get the talks going.” I knew they weren't going to do it, and I didn't blame them, really.

But in July of '58, we did send a message saying we would like to resume the talks. We did take the initiative, and I think that should be kept in mind. We informed the Chinese that we would like to resume the talks at the ambassadorial level, and we appointed Ambassador Beam, who was our ambassador in Warsaw to represent the U.S.. That's when the Warsaw talks began. But in August of '58, they started very heavy shelling of Quemoy, the largest and heaviest shelling that had taken place anywhere in recent history, it was said. I was just being transferred back from London. I was on home leave before taking up my job as Director of CA, and I was called back because of the crisis. I remember a number of meetings, particularly with Herter, who was Under Secretary at that time. “What are we going to do about this offshore island crisis?” The estimates were really quite pessimistic as to the Chinese Communist capabilities. I was rather surprised at the—I wouldn't say panic, but they were almost pushing the panic button. “What could we do in this situation?” And it turned out that—and I can't remember the exact decision, but I think we decided we would convoy, but that's as far as we would go.

Q: To the three-mile limit.

MARTIN: Yes, to the three-mile limit. That's right. The Nationalists would pick it up there. Well, a fairly decisive development was that the Nationalist Air Force, using our heat-seeking missiles, knocked down a number of the Communists' planes, and I think that probably had quite a chastening effect on them. I think after the experience way back to '49, they felt they needed air superiority. So the Communists agreed to resume the talks in Warsaw, and from then on they were the Warsaw talks. That crisis calmed down, but there was an aftermath which was rather interesting, and that is that Dulles and Robertson—I think McConaughy, too, yes, because I was in charge of the desk—no, let's see. They went out to Taiwan and talked to Chiang Kai-shek and got him to agree that he would not use force against the mainland. Here again, I think Dulles might have been surprised that he would agree to this, but, again, I think it shows his basic caution. In other words, despite all their talk and everything, the Nationalists really knew that they could not get

back on the mainland unless they had active U.S. support, and that they would do it without our support was never a serious threat. But that's the kind of threat that people kept worrying about. Maybe you can't blame them. But as I said before, the whole military history of Chiang Kai-shek, if he erred on any side, it was on the side of caution rather than the side of boldness.

Q: I remember talking to one of your colleagues in the CA when the offshore islands crisis of '58 was at its height, and he was convinced that the Soviet Union was absolutely behind the PRC and was facing a serious sort of monolithic threat there. Was that the general perception?

MARTIN: No, I don't think so. We were perhaps rather slow in seeing the beginning of the split, but certainly one of the factors—and I didn't mention this—that may have made the Chinese back down on this was the Soviets gave signals that they were not going to get involved. This may, in turn, have exacerbated the coming split between the two partners, the two allies. Yes, I think that we eventually did pick this up, because I remember it quite clearly, but it took a while. We had been, of course, seeing them as pretty monolithic. It took a while, perhaps too long, longer than it should have, to see that the frictions were getting very serious between them. We were entertaining the possibility, but were cautious about it.

Q: Do you have a sense of when this perception did begin to dawn to the working level at State and maybe other agencies?

MARTIN: Yes, I think probably about the time of the Great Leap Forward, because it was pretty obvious. The Russians—was it early '60 that they pulled out all of their technicians, and they were obviously not happy about the Great Leap Forward? I remember one reaction we had, and it may have been a good one or it may not have been a good one, there's sort of a doubt about it now, but I gave a lecture at the National War College on China in January of—in fact, it was on inauguration eve, January of 1961—and the thrust

of my lecture, which I think, looking back on it, seems to me to be somewhat exaggerated, but it seemed like a good thing at the time to me, was, “Just because there's a Sino-Soviet split, don't underestimate the threat of the Chinese.” And I went on and on about the terrible threat of the Chinese.

The idea was, I think it was exaggerated; I don't think it was completely wrong, but the thrust of my thesis was that the Chinese are really more dangerous than the Soviet Union, not because they're more powerful, but because they're more uncertain. You don't know what they're going to do, they're more unreliable, they're having these problems internally that might affect their external policy, and if you look at their propaganda, they're very belligerent and so forth. But it was to offset the idea that because there's a Sino-Soviet split, not to worry about the Chinese anymore, you see. So we were at that time definitely aware of the split. I would say the thing that stands out in my mind is when the Soviets pulled out their technicians and so forth. It was pretty obvious then, perhaps.

Q: I have a lot more, but I think we should stop.

MARTIN: My voice begins to give out after a couple of hours.

Q: You have really given us a wealth of information and insight, for which we certainly are very grateful.

Kennedy: Today is March 17, 1988. This is the third of a series of interviews with Ambassador Edwin W. Martin concerning his Chinese experiences. This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Foreign Service History Center of George Washington University and the Association for Diplomatic Studies. Professor Harold Hinton will be conducting the interview.

Q: Ambassador Martin, I think we've now reached the point where it's appropriate to begin talking about your tour of duty in Hong Kong, 1967. And you were Consul General at that time. I myself visited Hong Kong during that period more than once. Of course the

period coinciding with the Cultural Revolution, at least the heroic days, so to speak, of the Cultural Revolution on the mainland, but first I'd like to ask if you could tell us something about your view of the utility of Hong Kong as a listening post with respect to China. If I may add, we now of course have an embassy in Beijing which we didn't then, and yet we still maintain considerable listening facilities in Hong Kong. Why is this?

MARTIN: Well, let me go back to my time there before we had an embassy, before we had any kind of office. Before we even had the liaison office that we set up after Henry Kissinger'svisit to Beijing in the spring of 1973, Hong Kong was a kind of window on the world for the Chinese and it was one that those countries such as the United States which did not have any official representation there, really any private representation of any kind in China, it was a window that we could look through to see what was going on in China.

And we got our information there through interviews, some very extensive interviews, with people coming out of China, refugees, people who were able to go in and out on business, and also the diplomats of other governments who were stationed there. And we were able during the Cultural Revolution — as you pointed out, I went to Hong Kong during the height of the Cultural Revolution — we were able to expand our sources of information because there was an increased flow of refugees. There was a lot of factional fighting among Red Guards and other communist groups who delighted in exposing what they would consider past crimes of the Party. They published their own little papers, they published documents. So there was a real explosion of information at that time about what was going on in China. And we also were able to supply even some of our diplomatic friends in Peking with information which they didn't have.

They were of course fairly restricted in the information they were able to obtain in China. And most of them had fairly small establishments in Beijing at the time. We had a very large establishment in Hong Kong. Our consulate there was larger than most embassies in terms of numbers of personnel, and we had a lot of people who were specialists in China, spoke the language, and we were able to monitor radio and monitor newspapers.

So on the whole this was a, especially when I was Consul General there, was a very fruitful source of information. And of all the sources that we had, it was the most important.

Now I don't know as much about, from personal knowledge, about the value of Hong Kong as a listening post now since we have an embassy in Beijing and we have consulates, but I can still imagine that there are certain types of information which we can get from travelers, and we maintain an expert staff there. I think we've considerably reduced, and we should have reduced, the size of the China- watching staff in Hong Kong, but we still have them there.

Q: May I ask whether you found the British authorities in Hong Kong helpful in getting information?

MARTIN: Yes, they were. The British were helpful. And they could supply information from first-hand observation, of course, which we didn't have. That was helpful. They could talk to Chinese officials, Chinese government, PRC government, and so they could get a certain angle that we couldn't get on the news. On the other hand, we could get a certain volume of information which they didn't have access to, or if they did they didn't have the facilities to utilize it, as we did. I'm speaking here of British officials from Beijing who came through Hong Kong.

Q: In view of all the controversy we've heard in recent years about CIA, is there anything you could say about CIA as a source of information.

MARTIN: Well, as you can imagine, I can't get into detail, but it was, the operation there in Hong Kong was an intelligence collection operation. It wasn't a covert operation. And naturally they played an important part in the information that we got.

Q: There was quite a lot of radical activity in Hong Kong while you were there?

MARTIN: Yes.

Q: Did you either personally or did the consulate general in general feel threatened at any time physically?

MARTIN: Well, I don't think we did except in this sense—and I'll give you an illustration. When I arrived, which was the beginning of October in 1967, to take up the post of Consul General, we went to the residence from the airport by a rather circuitous route. And I recall that on the road when we were going to the Consul General's residence, there was a paper bag in the road and the driver of our car very carefully skirted this because the radicals or the terrorists or what you want to call them, were sort of randomly leaving bombs around on the roads and on the trolley tracks and so forth. And a number of people were killed.

I recall specifically that a police inspector who was trying to defuse a bomb was killed and the British in their inimitable style staged a very showy funeral with the bagpipes and the slow march and all the rest of it, learning from their long years of imperial experience how to put on a show like this. And of course the British stiff upper lip and all the rest of it. But there was another person who was murdered in a rather gruesome way, kind of a talk-show person on a Hong Kong radio and the Communists didn't like him for some reason or other, or the radicals didn't like him, so he was wiped out.

I think there was a certain feeling of insecurity, but there were never any direct threats against us or against the American consulate. When I went over to Macao, because I was also accredited to Macao, to the colonial government there, I remember seeing the vestiges of demonstrations there. The governor of Hong Kong at that time was David Trench, Sir David Trench. And the Colonial Secretary, sort of the number two man in the government, was a fellow named Gass, and there were slogans painted on the wall, “Hang Trench and Burn Gass.”

Of course there had been a good deal of fright in Hong Kong during '67. And I think perhaps my predecessor, Ed Rice, experienced more of that than I did, although things

were still pretty hot in the fall of '67. But one thing that rather brought this home to me—well, perhaps I should say first that quite a few people evacuated Hong Kong and there was a good deal of capital flight in '67. A couple of personal experiences: My wife was asked by the International Rescue Committee to supervise a number of daycare centers for refugees children, which she did most of the time we were in Hong Kong. And the reason she was asked to do it, partly it was because she had the background in this profession, but the person who had been doing it before was one of those who had left Hong Kong. The other illustration is one of the first official public acts that I was requested to do in Hong Kong was to open a small oil blending plant that Mobil Oil had constructed. And it was one of these things where I was asked to go and make a little speech and cut the ribbon. This was played up, it made headlines in the Hong Kong papers. There are something like a dozen papers in Hong Kong. And it was played up as an expression of American confidence in the future of Hong Kong. And that really brought home to me the extent of the jitters there.

And as a matter of fact, this was, I think, mainly coincidence but in '68 there was a steady recovery of confidence in Hong Kong and the number of incidents tapered off. And of course in China, I think, the army was beginning to crack down a bit on the radicals. But of course this oil blending plant had been planned and financed long before the panic, but the fact is that Mobil went ahead with it, while some other companies didn't go ahead with plans that they had. Early in '68 another American company, insurance company, asked me to come and do the same thing, cut the ribbon, and I did that. And that again was played up as an example of American confidence. So the Americans were among the bolder, more confident people of Hong Kong.

Q: I think it's rather obvious that Hong Kong could have been taken over by some combination of internal and external pressures, say in '67. I realize this is a simple-minded scenario, but why didn't this happen, in your opinion?

MARTIN: Well, pure speculation of course. The one thing that I used to emphasize to America businessmen — and in '68 and '69, I don't know how many dozen presidents and vice presidents of corporations and so forth would come to my office and ask my opinion about whether they should invest in Hong Kong. And I would say, I certainly cannot make up your mind or the mind of your company whether you should invest, but I can try to give you a picture of how we see the picture in Hong Kong and on that basis you can make up your mind. And the main thrust of it was that Hong Kong is very important, at least at this stage, to China for economic reasons. Ninety-nine percent, roughly, of the people of Hong Kong are Chinese. Most of what they eat and what they wear comes from China. And Hong Kong's currency is a good hard currency. And China makes a great deal of important foreign exchange out of Hong Kong. Also I think Hong Kong is important to the PRC because of what I mentioned earlier, it's sort of a window on the world. And they had there the Bank of China, they had the people who sort of took the place of diplomats or consular officials — the NCNA people, the news agency people. And it's a place that is obviously valuable to the Chinese, and it's so valuable, as a matter of fact, that although one would think that in this radical period particularly that Hong Kong would have been a target, even then they left it alone.

Now I think, however, that if the radicals had prevailed that they might have —

Q: You mean prevailed in Beijing?

MARTIN: In Beijing, yes. That's what I mean. If they had prevailed in Beijing conceivably they would have gone for Hong Kong, I think they might well have. But they didn't.

Q: Of course they did in fact burn the British mission in Beijing.

MARTIN: They burned the British mission, yes, and there were incidents like that all over the world, as a matter of fact. But that was the radicals who did it. Not only that, but they even took over the foreign ministry for a short time in Beijing. So things were pretty

haywire as far as China's foreign relations were concerned. But of course they were also very preoccupied with their internal affairs, which may be another reason that Hong Kong survived.

Q: If we could go for just a minute beyond your experience in Hong Kong down to the present, since obviously Hong Kong is still important to the Chinese for the reasons you mentioned, this hasn't really changed, why have they been so insistent on taking it over when presumably that will degrade some of its utility?

MARTIN: Yes. Well, that's a good question. I would say that in—what was it, '86 they decided this?

Q: '84.

MARTIN: '84, okay. As long ago as that, time goes so fast. Probably the main reason was that they were sort of on the spot. The 99-year lease which they made for the New Territories in 1898 expires in 1997. And there was a lot of speculation, has been for some years, what are they going to do then. It was a kind of deadline that they had to face. And they would have had to have some kind of excuse if they hadn't done anything about it. So I think perhaps that was the thing that triggered that.

Another reason is that comparatively, I think, Hong Kong is probably not as important on the economic side — it's still important but not as important as it was in the earlier years. They've developed their trade much more elsewhere and so Hong Kong doesn't have quite the relativeimportance. And the same thing goes for the window on the world function of Hong Kong. They've gotten into the U.N., they've expanded trade. They've expanded their diplomatic relations. And so it just isn't that important. Whether or not the Taiwan situation had anything to do with it I'm not sure, but of course Hong Kong is a piece of Chinese territory, just as Taiwan is, and if they hadn't done anything about Hong Kong, one wonders if they could have pressed the Taiwan issue as much.

The other side of that is that they say they're going to treat Hong Kong in a way that will show the people of Taiwan that they have nothing to fear. So—and I must say, I think this is pertinent, during my time in Hong Kong I asked, especially toward the end — I left there in 1970 — some of my British friends in the government about the future and what would happen. The Chinese presumably would take it over eventually or want to take it over. And I was told that the British at that time would have been glad to negotiate for the turnover but the Chinese were not interested. The Chinese simply were not interested.

Q: If I could go back to Hong Kong as a listening or watching post with respect to the Mainland, you witnessed the hectic days of the Cultural Revolution, what would you say was the major turning point, as you saw it there in Hong Kong. For example, the rise and fall of the Red Guard movement. Were you able to chart that with some accuracy?

MARTIN: Yes, pretty well. I really can't remember very many specifics. The things that stand out in my mind are that we felt that the Cultural Revolution more or less came to an end in '69 with the Ninth Party Congress in April of '69 and Lin Piao's ascendancy, and that the army really was then pretty much in control. And we wrote in this—in fact I think this was fairly widespread—that after '69 people talked about the Post-Cultural Revolution activities and so forth. And so it came as a surprise to me, and maybe to other people, when the Chinese began talking about the Cultural Revolution ending in '76. So to go back to '69, I would say that it really seemed to us to be a turning point internally with the army really assuming a very large role and Lin Piao being proclaimed the heir apparent.

And then another turning point in a sense, although it was sort of a culmination, was the 1969 Ussuri River Sino-Soviet clashes. That really triggered almost a panicky reaction in Chinese media. And I think that as far as the PRC was concerned they really began to feel frightened about the possibility of a war with the Soviet Union. So I would say that the spring of '69 was a real turning point. It was from then on that in Hong Kong we began to see minor signs of the Chinese being interested in getting into some sort of contact with us. It was at a low level, nothing at my level, but several of our China experts on our

staff were invited to parties where the NCNA people would be and so forth. It was all very low level, but nevertheless you could see that the Chinese in Beijing were reacting to the perceived threat.

Q: I remember having a friendly argument with your successor in Hong Kong in his office a couple of years later. He was quite convinced that the Chinese opening to the United States, whatever one chooses to call it, was motivated overwhelmingly by a desire to get concessions in Taiwan. I said, all well and good, but they've got the Soviet problem, which I think is primary.

MARTIN: I think the Soviet problem was primary. I also think that by 1970 the Chinese were observing our interest in getting out of Vietnam. And this also provided somewhat of an opening. And just to give a footnote to this, following my assignment as Consul General in Hong Kong, I went to the Claremont colleges, specifically to Claremont Graduate Center, in Claremont, California, as a diplomat in residence and visiting professor. And of course this academic scene you know a lot better than I, but in the early '70s, in the spring of '70 it had been pretty bad.

Q: Cambodia.

MARTIN: Well, by that fall things had calmed down a lot but I went to a faculty meeting—it wasn't a faculty meeting, it was a meeting of some members of the faculty who apparently had been meeting and were very upset about the Vietnam situation. And they were carrying on about it as though nothing had really changed. And I said, well, I just came from Hong Kong. And for the last three or four years we've had between 350 and 400 U.S. naval vessels a year in Hong Kong harbor — I mean visiting Hong Kong—and we've had a great deal of R & R and so forth. And I can assure you that the Vietnamization is going on and the statement of the Administration that they wanted to pull out of Vietnam is the policy. Those at the meeting were saying, oh, that's baloney. I said, it's not baloney, it's true. This is happening and I've seen the concrete evidence of it in the last few months

that I was in Hong Kong. So the Chinese are not dumb, they could see it, too. So I think that was a factor. Now I really don't think Taiwan had anything to do with it, at least very little. It was primarily—after all, you know better than I, just as well anyway, that during the Cultural Revolution how isolated the Chinese were. There was one point where they only had one ambassador in a foreign post, and that was Huang Hua in Egypt. In this situation the realistic and hard-headed people in the Chinese government (and they still continued to be there despite the radicals), especially with the Ussuri River clashes, obviously have to look around for some way to break China's isolation.

So I think those are the factors, and that was our judgment there, too.

Q: Was it your feeling that Zhou En-lai genuinely wanted some sort of relationship with the United States really for its own sake, but number one perhaps used the Soviet threat, which of course was real, as a way of levering his colleagues into it and perhaps the colleagues like Mao were more resistant? Or did you have any way of forming impressions?

MARTIN: It's hard to know what the internal situation was there. I don't know whether we speculated on that. What we did do was act on the belief that the Chinese would be more receptive. Of course the Nixon administration when it came in immediately said we must do something to try to get China more involved in the world. We certainly weren't ready for anything like recognition, but we were willing to take small steps. And we in Hong Kong as early as the summer of '69 began to recommend, and into '70, recommend the kinds of steps that actually were taken, such as allowing tourists to buy Chinese-origin goods in Hong Kong, which had always been a real headache for us. And eventually allowing American-subsidiary companies to trade with China. That had been a very difficult thing, of course. And easing up on travel restrictions. I'm not saying that we were the ones that recommended them and the government acted on it, that's not true. Because they were also thinking the same things in Washington. And as you know, there were a whole

series of small steps that occurred in the latter part of '69 and early '70 of the kind that I mentioned which preceded the famous invitation to the American ping-pong team.

I'm sorry, I really didn't answer your question because I don't know what the internal situation was there and I don't remember that we speculated on that much. We just saw what was happening.

Q: I think the point you just made is very important and interesting, more so than the one I was talking about earlier, because there still seems to be an impression in American China-watching circles, I mean academic China-watching circles, that the opening really came wholly from the Chinese side. Which is obviously not true.

MARTIN: Yes, if they just look at the record there and see the things that we did. And another sort of footnote, in August of '69 the new Secretary of State, Bill Rogers, came out with Marshall Green and a small entourage, Mrs. Rogers, to visit Hong Kong among other places. And we had a very good session at my house after we gave them a dinner one night, about what things were happening, things that were changing, our relation with China, what we could do. And we had a discussion, he was very open about it, and so were we, and Marshall, and we all agreed. So these kinds of steps that we took were concrete steps. And the Chinese could read them as such and did.

It's funny. I don't know what it is, academia or the press, but they picked up the Chinese invitation and they sort of ignored the steps that we'd taken. I really think that we took the initiative. But on the grounds that we thought the Chinese would be receptive, whereas in the '60s the Chinese really weren't very—not that we did very much, but in the Warsaw talks we offered things like exchange of correspondents and easing up on travel restrictions. At one point we offered pharmaceutical supplies and grain and so forth. This was all turned down by the Chinese because in the '60s they were in no shape to do anything like this.

Q: In May of 1970 the Chinese interrupted the Warsaw talks that had just resumed earlier that year, with a great blast over Cambodia, I'm sure you remember that. Was it the feeling of yourself and your staff at that time that this was a very serious and possible termination of the process, or did you expect it to be resumed later, or did you have any sense of it?

MARTIN: Well, I don't think I did. And there again I must say that the Warsaw talks were something that we were not, and I think this was a mistake, but we in Hong Kong were not kept informed about them at all.

Q: Really?

MARTIN: No, we were not, which I think was too bad. We should have been. But in any case, the Cambodia thing I don't remember much about except in a kind of personal way. In the spring of '70, I don't know, maybe March or so, I was invited by Art Hummel, who was then ambassador in Burma, to come over to Rangoon and to brief, or to talk to, some of the Burmese officials about how we saw the situation in China. Because the Burmese, as you know, are very nonaligned nonaligned people and we didn't ever get very close to them on an official basis. They kept us at arms length. But he thought, well, if I have a visiting fireman come in it might provide an opening to get across our point of view. Well, as a result of his invitation, the department asked several other embassies if they wanted me to visit. Besides Burma, I went to Malaysia, to Singapore and on to Djakarta.

And the Chinese press picked this up when I got back and accused me of being the guy that was responsible for this Cambodian business. And I didn't know a damn thing about it, I hadn't gone near Cambodia or anything. But it was just one of these—they picked up the fact that I visited these countries, although there was no publicity about it. Obviously they were able to do that without much trouble. And they said I was a conspirator responsible for Sihanouk's ouster—was that what it was?

Q: That's right. That started it.

MARTIN: I had somehow engineered this.

Q: It sounds as though your trip to Burma in early '70 might have had something to do with your appointment as Ambassador the following year.

MARTIN: Well it might have. But of course I had served there before, too.

Q: Oh, that's right. Of course. Yes.

MARTIN: I'd been there before. But I think that was just because I had—you know, as Consul General in Hong Kong, it was a much more demanding and important job than Ambassador to Burma. And it was considered by the department a Chief of Mission assignment. It's only because Hong Kong is not an independent country that you have to be a Consul General there, but in terms of the department, you get all the perks of a Chief of Mission, such as flying first class and all that stuff. Of course all consulates general, practically, have to report to an embassy. In other words, they're under the supervision of their embassies, but in Hong Kong you are as independent as any mission, you report directly to Washington.

Q: To the bureau. Did you report to London?

MARTIN: No, never reported to London. Had nothing to do with London. Unless it was something to do with British policy. But otherwise we had no more connection with London than we had with Manila or Paris or any other place. It was a totally independent post. And much larger than most embassies at that time. I had 400 people on my staff.

Q: That is big.

MARTIN: Well, another thing. It wasn't just, of course China-watching. That was important and I was the last Consul General there before we had some sort of an office in China. But in '68 or '69, we became the second largest immigration visa-issuing office in the world,

because the U.S. had changed immigration laws so that more Asians could immigrate. So we had a huge visa staff. And while I was there, they established an American Chamber of Commerce for the first time in Hong Kong's history. I was the first honorary president. And for the first time our two-way trade with Hong Kong went over $1 billion U.S., so there was a big trade expansion, big—as I was saying, I myself didn't have much opportunity to do much China-watching. I was engaged in dealing with all these visiting firemen from businesses, from the military, Seventh Fleet ships in there all the time, and we had an awful lot of congressmen, many more than usual because the Vietnam war was still going on. And Congressmen would go down there and they'd come up to Hong Kong to get a breather or to do shopping before they went back to the States. So I really had a seven-day-a-week job on that kind of thing. I had some good people on my staff. Allen Whiting was the deputy my first year and then Harald Jacobson took over. And they were both very good on China-watching.

Q: Is there anything else you think we should cover from your Hong Kong days?

MARTIN: No, I can't think of anything in particular. I might say just as a footnote that among the visiting firemen I had and entertained were Ronald and Nancy Reagan and their two children. He was then governor of California. And California having the largest Chinese population of any state, he had a special interest in Hong Kong. He was on his way to Manila as a representative of President Nixon to be present at the inauguration of President, I guess it was Marcos.

Q: President Marcos, yes.

MARTIN: Marcos at that time.

Q: Shall we move on to Burma?

MARTIN: Yes, sure. But before we do, I would like to say a word about an important aspect of the work of our Consulate General in Hong Kong that I have neglected to

mention: its publications. It published a daily survey in English of the China mainland press, and, less frequently, a translation of important Chinese documents called Current Background. These publications were not only widely used by China-watchers in the U.S. government but by many private individuals, especially academics, both in the United States and in other countries. Monthly publications in English and Chinese were also put out without attribution to the Consulate General. Its Chinese publication was said to have the largest circulation of any Chinese language magazine in the world outside of China itself.

Q: Burma must have been kind of a rest after Hong Kong.

MARTIN: Yes, well I had that year in between as diplomat in residence. And that was an interesting year. I did some lecturing for the Council on Foreign Relations at various West Coast foreign affairs groups. That was a fairly good rest for a year.

I remember being at a conference in the spring of '71 and talking about how you could see the relaxation and the easing of relations between the PRC and the United States beginning to take place. One of the professors at the conference was absolutely incredulous. He pointed to all the wicked things that the Nixon administration was doing and said, how do you expect the Chinese government to improve relations with such a reactionary administration? His question showed how some people don't realize that the Chinese Communist leadership is pretty hard-headed when it comes to what they think is in their interest. They're not swayed by some things that people think they're swayed by.

Q: Henry Kissinger has called Mao Zedong the most realistic statesman he ever encountered except de Gaulle.

MARTIN: Sure. Well, I think Zhou En-lai was, but I don't know whether de Gaulle was or not. But they are. They are capable. It's amazing how people can be ignorant of this fact,

and that they are willing to deal with anybody if they think it is in China's interest no matter how ideologically opposed they may be.

Okay, I can't think of any more Hong Kong at the moment.

Q: Well, about Burma. Something in general perhaps to begin with?

MARTIN: Well. Burma was interesting. Of course I had been there before and it was now a rather sad place to be because Ne Win had been a virtual dictator since 1962, and I went there in '71. And a lot of people we had known in the early '50s when we were there had been thrown in jail. I thought in the early '50s Burma was in the hands of rather naive people and people certainly who were socialists, but nevertheless people who were generally convinced of the importance of democracy. And they were people who were willing to treat the minorities, who make up about 28% of the Burmese population, with a certain amount of respect. The president was a Shan and the foreign minister was a Shan. When I went back in '71, I learned that a lot of these people had been thrown in jail. Most of them were out but still they'd been cowed. Minorities were not treated with the same respect. And the Burmese military junta which had taken power in '62 under Ne Win had invented a kind of Burmese version of socialism, actually they called it the Burmese Way to Socialism. And it was kind of a mixture of Marxism- Leninism, Burmese nationalism and Buddhism. There were some nice people in the government but they really were not very competent. Ne Win himself so cowed everybody that the government was more or less at a standstill, and still is.

Q: He's recently admitted that he made some mistakes, which I think is encouraging.

MARTIN: Oh, has he? I didn't know that. He certainly has. But of course it was an interesting place it wasn't particularly interesting for China-watching, but I was there at the time when Nixon went over to China and that was a big breakthrough. So instead

of ignoring each other at social events, the Chinese ambassador and I exchanged pleasantries. We never really got well- acquainted.

Q: I wonder whether since to Burma China is by far the most important external problem and since you were reasonably fresh from Hong Kong and an experienced China watcher, whether they showed any interest in learning from you about this?

MARTIN: No, none whatsoever, or from anybody else as far as I could see. Ne Win had no interest in that. And furthermore the Burmese—of course they had kind of a special relationship with China. They had the longest border with China of any country in Southeast Asia. They were the first non-Communist country to recognize the PRC. So they had maintained diplomatic relations and they had visitors back and forth. China had an aid program there.

But on the other hand the Chinese, as in other Southeast Asian countries, had backed an insurgency, the White Flag Communists, the BCP. And so on the one hand, the Burmese felt they needed to get along with the Chinese the best they could. On the other hand, they were very unhappy about the fact the Chinese were supporting insurgency there. And the best they could do with that was to try to fight the insurgency. But they were too timid, I guess, in a way, and maybe understandably so, to really do anything about it in a diplomatic sense or to get any support from us.

Now I will tell you something which perhaps will surprise you. I really only saw Ne Win a few times. I saw him when I presented credentials, I saw him when we had some visiting firemen on narcotics business and at big receptions, but he made a practice of not seeing foreign diplomats, very deliberately, on a private basis. When I made my farewell call on him he indicated that he was concerned that the United States—he never put this on the public record—continue to maintain an interest in Southeast Asia. He obviously realized that for a country like Burma to pursue its neutralist, nonaligned policy you have to have a balance of power. And he made it pretty plain he was concerned lest the United States

reduce its power in the area. Again what he says in public and what he says in private are two different things. I think anyone who runs a small country with a border with a powerful country like China is going to have that concern. And the Burmese actually in various nonaligned conferences, I must say, have been among the purest in their adherence to nonalignment. I don't know whether, I haven't followed any recently, have they had nonaligned conferences? You don't seem to read about them so much.

Q: They have them, but the Burmese have withdrawn from the movement.

MARTIN: They have withdrawn?

Q: After the '69 meeting in Havana, yes.

At various times in the history of U.S. relations with Burma, the so-called KMT irregulars have been a big problem. Was that also true during your tenure?

MARTIN: Yes. Well, it was during my first tour in Burma.

Q: Primarily the first tour, not the second?

MARTIN: The second tour, no. They were of concern mainly to the people who were fighting the drug problem, the narcotic problem. And as a matter of fact the priority during my mission there was to try to get the Burmese government to cooperate in fighting drugs. And I won't go into all that, I've got that on another tape. But I think we were quite successful at the time. It took a long time, a good deal of persuasion to get the Burmese to cooperate on the narcotics problem. One of the keys to this success was something that we had nothing to do with, and that was that, especially after the U.S. pulled out of Vietnam, they began to have trouble with the drug dealers selling their heroin to some of the what in Burma passes for middle class young people. And so when the Burmese authorities began to see that some of their own people outside of the hill tribes (they didn't give a darn about them) were being menaced, then they began to get very much

interested in the drug problem. But the remnants of the KMT troops in Burma, some of them anyway, were very much involved in this drug smuggling business. As a matter of fact, a number of the other insurgents groups there were also involved because this was one way they could finance themselves.

Q: Did you ever see any evidence of the PRC's involvement in the narcotics trade? Any direction?

MARTIN: No. But I would qualify that to the extent that there was evidence, I think, that the BCP was involved, as other insurgent groups were. Opium was grown in areas along the China border that they controlled. And opium was coming out of those areas. At that time, and when I left Burma, the BCP was being trained by the Chinese across the border. And there were reports that there were actually Chinese cadres with the BCP on the Burma side. So it's possible that the Communists were involved, but we didn't have any evidence beyond what I've told you.

I might say, give you one sort of anecdote because of your interest in Sino-Soviet relations. I can't remember the name of my Soviet colleague, unfortunately. You probably wouldn't have heard of him, I'd never heard of him. But he had been stationed in China, in Peking, during the Cultural Revolution. So he had gone through a good deal; there were anti-Soviet demonstrations, too, as you'll recall, in Peking. And he knew who I was, which was not surprising. I made my initial call on him. The new ambassador makes the calls first. Before my call we had just gotten word about Lin Piao's disappearance, and I thought he was being purged. I mentioned this to the Soviet ambassador, and he was absolutely incredulous because at the time he was in China Lin Piao was the bigshot, the heir, and all the rest of it. He didn't think Lin Piao could possibly have been arrested. When he returned my call some weeks later he said, “You were right about Lin Piao”. That was interesting to me, that we knew something of such importance he didn't know. At our diplomatic corps dinners which we had to say farewell to a colleague, I would carry on some conversation with the Chinese ambassador in Chinese. He couldn't speak any English, or very little, And

the Russian ambassador couldn't speak any Chinese, so on a very superficial level I acted as interpreter. [laughter].

Q: Trying to establish an American triangle?

MARTIN: Yes.

Q: Very good. Well thank you very much. That ends this session. Thank you.

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Q: This is a continuation of our interview. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy, the director of the Foreign Service History Center, and Ambassador Martin and I were talking at lunch. It's still the 17th of March. And we thought there might be one other question or series of short questions, we might put. And that's concerning the Kennedy years and our attitude towards China.

Ambassador Martin, what job did you have during the Kennedy years, dealing with China?

MARTIN: Well, when Kennedy was inaugurated in January of '61 I was, and had been for several years, director of the Office of Chinese Affairs. And there was some expectation that with the new party coming in, the Democrats, and with JFK of course the youngest president and so forth, there would be new things happening. And of course there were new things that happened in his administration. But in the China posture of the United States, not as much changed as some people thought might change. The innovation which occurred during my few months as director of the Chinese Affairs during the Kennedy administration—.

Q: What were the dates, about?

MARTIN: Well, as I say, Kennedy came in on January 20.

Q: '61.

MARTIN: We're talking about '61. And I was the director until that summer. That summer I went to become political advisor to CINCPAC [Commander in Chief, Pacific]. Well, the innovation I was talking about was apparently Bowles', Chester Bowles' idea. Bowles had been appointed by Kennedy as the Under Secretary of State. And the Secretary, of course, was Dean Rusk. And the idea came down, I think, from Bowles' office that we should now recognize the People's Republic of Mongolia and this initiative did not come from the Office of Chinese Affairs, the Far East Bureau, which actually opposed it although not very strongly. And I think the reason for opposing it was that we didn't think there was really much to be gained by it and it would simply succeed in antagonizing the Nationalists.

Q: Nationalist Chinese?

MARTIN: The Chinese, yes, with whom we had diplomatic relations of course. In any case, it got to the point where I was instructed to go down to the Hill and brief Chairman Morgan, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, which I did. And as I recall, Dr. Morgan was not particularly disturbed by this, didn't think there would be any real problem on the Hill with it. And then I was transferred out of Chinese affairs and later on I gathered that this whole idea was squashed, presumably in the White House, and that it was not one that had White House backing. Apparently it had been Chester Bowles' pet project. I think one thing that did come out of it was the admission of Mongolia into the U.N. We obviously did not veto it. As I was saying to you at lunch, one casualty of this whole episode was that George Yeh, who was the Chinese ambassador to the United States at the time, was fired by Chiang Kai-shek apparently because Chiang was unhappy that Mongolia had been admitted to the U.N. But this happened after I left.

But also, I'm sure that this was just one illustration of the way Bowles was reputed to operate, which was rather independently. I'm not exactly sure but I think he lasted less

than a year as Under Secretary of State. And I think this was perhaps an example of the kind of thing that he initiated that he had obviously not cleared with his bosses.

Q: Chester Bowles is described as what?

MARTIN: As a—and I don't know who said it, but it's one that sticks in my mind because I thought it was an apt description, as a giant flywheel that went round and round without any real connection with the rest of the departmental machinery.

Q: One further question on this. Rusk has been reputed to have been very much an Asia-centric person. He looked towards Asia and left Europe in the hands of George Ball for the most part. But did Rusk make any noises that you know of about recognizing Communist China?

MARTIN: No. I don't think he did. And the business—I'm not sure, I didn't operate very much at the Rusk level as an office director, but I don't think there was any real pressure. I think there might have been a public expectation, which obviously wasn't very well founded, that Kennedy would do things differently. And even as late as the year after he'd been in office, people were surprised that our ambassador, who had been appointed by the Eisenhower administration, Everett Drumright.

Q: As ambassador to Taiwan?

MARTIN: Our ambassador in Taiwan, our ambassador to the Republic of China, was still there. And again I can't give any inside information because I don't know. I wasn't privy to any. But the speculation was that the Kennedy administration had other fish to fry and did not want to move on the China thing in any decisive way or any radical way because they didn't want to upset the applecart or they had other things that they gave greater priority to.

And, as a matter of fact, of course during the Kennedy administration while the Warsaw talks continued and there was a certain amount of flexibility there on our part, nevertheless

they didn't get anywhere. And that was mainly due to the fact that in the '60s, first with the “Great Leap Forward” and then after an interim period, with the Cultural Revolution, the People's Republic of China was in a very radical period. And it was not a period in which they would have been very receptive to any moves. So I feel that whereas certainly from the mid-'50s on the United States had a—well, from the Korean War on, from '51 on, the United States had a pretty rigid position on China, in the '60s we had a more flexible position (we could have been more flexible), but the Chinese simply were not in a position to respond and didn't.

Q: Did you have, being in charge of Chinese affairs, did you have tucked in your lower file cabinet drawer a plan for recognizing China in case somebody called upon you?

MARTIN: No, no we didn't. I don't think it ever came close.

Q: Just as a professional foreign service officer, you didn't even think this was worth making a contingency plan?

MARTIN: No, I don't think so. Now there might have been more thinking along the line, and I think that would have been a more appropriate place in some ways, in the Policy Planning Staff. They were supposed to be thinking about long-range plans and so forth. We were all bogged down, as many desks were, with handling day-to-day things and reporting and briefing. Certainly we didn't see anything like recognition close enough to make any plans. As I said earlier on this tape, it wasn't until after the '69 Sino-Soviet clashes and what looked to us then as sort of the end of the Cultural Revolution and various other developments that we thought now is the time when we can start changing our relations with China, and the Nixon administration of course coming in January of '69, said right off the bat that they felt our relations with China should be adjusted. As I said earlier, the Chinese weren't in any mood for change with the Cultural Revolution and so forth, and the United States after all, from '64 on was more and more deeply involved in Vietnam and the Vietnam war and the Chinese were backing the North Vietnamese.

So again our preoccupation was with Vietnam. China was on the other side. We were certainly not, I was not in the Office of Chinese Affairs at this time, I might add, but just looking at it from this perspective, you might say that in the '60s neither the United States nor China were in a posture where recognition was going to be seriously considered. It just wasn't in the works, that's all.

I might say one other thing while we're on this tape that is of interest, again as sort of a footnote. One of the things that I did in May of 1961 when I was still director was to make an around-the-world trip with Lyndon Johnson and his wife and several other people. He was then vice president. And I was told off to go and brief Johnson about the trip. As a matter of fact, we weren't sure it was going to be an around-the-world trip when we started out. It was supposed to be just a trip to the Far East mainly. But I recall particularly his reaction when I said we were going to Taipei. And he really balked at that suggestion. Now the Democrats were just back in office after being out of office for two terms, for eight years. And Johnson obviously remembered the very controversial China policy and so forth, in that he thought that going to visit Chiang Kai-shek was not going to be very good for his political career. And he really balked at this idea. And I tried to explain why under the circumstances—he was going to visit a number of countries—that he ought to go to Taiwan. And he interrupted me and said, “You know, Ed, I want to tell you a story about the man in Texas who had a drinking problem. And he also had a hearing problem. And he went to his doctor about the hearing problem and the doctor said, 'how much do you drink, Joe?' And Joe said, 'I drink about a pint a day.' And the doctor said, 'You better cut that out if you want your hearing to improve.' So about a month later the doctor encountered Joe on the street and he was reeling a bit. And he said, 'Joe, didn't I tell you to cut that drinking out?' And Joe said, 'What did you say?' He said, 'Didn't I tell you to cut that drinking out or it was going to affect your hearing?' And Joe said, 'Oh, yeah, well I did that for a while, Doc, but I found that I like what I drink better than I like what I hear'.” So that's how Johnson felt about going to Taiwan. But we finally persuaded him to go. And he, as he was in other places, was more interested—the thing he was interested in most as

soon as we got to a place was what the joint communique was going to be like. But he did meet with Chiang and we had a dinner party at Chiang's residence.

It was interesting to me in a way because I don't think Lyndon Johnson—of course he was a Roosevelt prot#g# in a sense, I suppose, but I never thought of him being particularly a liberal Democrat, I guess he was, but that sort of reaction, almost visceral reaction—I don't want to be associated with Chiang Kai-shek—I thought was rather interesting.

Q: It's interesting. Okay. Thank you. We'll close this once again.

End of interview